

► NASHUA

Johns-Manville plant coming down



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■ Contractors spraying water to contain any asbestos released from demolition of contaminated building.

By GRACE F. MURPHY
Telegraph Staff

NASHUA — Rather than a wrecking ball, water was the key tool used by contractors who began tearing down the former Johns-Manville plant Wednesday.

After testing demolition techniques on a shed, contractors began removing 16-by-28-foot sections of one of the two asbestos-contaminated buildings deemed a health risk by the state in case of fire or collapse.

Each section was sprayed with water before removal and being placed in plastic-lined rolloff containers to prevent the release of asbestos dust.

About 20 air monitors — some upwind, some downwind and others on the roofs of nearby buildings — surrounded the site at 40 Bridge and 10 Sanders streets.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is spending \$650,000 to remove the smaller building at 10 Sanders St. and remove dust collection system pipes that collapsed when the roof caved in at 40 Bridge St. this winter.

The city is contributing \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million in in-kind services, such as allowing the landfill to be used for asbestos waste.

Contractors started demolishing at Sanders St. on Wednesday and will continue during the weekend through next Friday, according to EPA regional coordinator Paul [unclear].

For the past few weeks, crews have conducted predemolition work. This included the removal of heavy loads on the roof and the defunct sprinkler system, conducting background air testing and erecting fences.

Demolition originally was scheduled to start last week, but it was delayed so that the building would not be left exposed during the holiday weekend.

From Bridge Street, motorists and neighbors could spy the tops of two excavators, rolloff containers lined with plastic and some of the air monitors.

From behind the site, residents

who saw workers in white protective masks and suits and demolition equipment showed up to ask what was going on, Groulx said.

Officials from the state Department of Health and Human Services were on site Wednesday to supervise the demolition and monitor the air quality readings.

Dennis Pinski, a supervisor with the department's bureau of health risk assessment, said Wednesday that the demolition appeared to be proceeding without problem.

Steve Beyer, who is with the occupational health bureau, said the state set up its own air monitors and has computers measuring the temperature, humidity and wind direction to determine if any of the monitors on site need to be moved.

As each section of wall and roof is removed — and the air sampling shows no release of asbestos particles — then the demolition of the next section will continue, he said.

Contractors are using plenty of water to prevent any release, he said.

"We're using lots of water which makes a fine mist, so anyone seeing a cloud should know it's probably just a mist of water, not a cloud of asbestos," he said.

Anyone with questions about the project can attend open houses held every two weeks on site from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. One was scheduled Wednesday with the next one scheduled for Sept. 18.

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